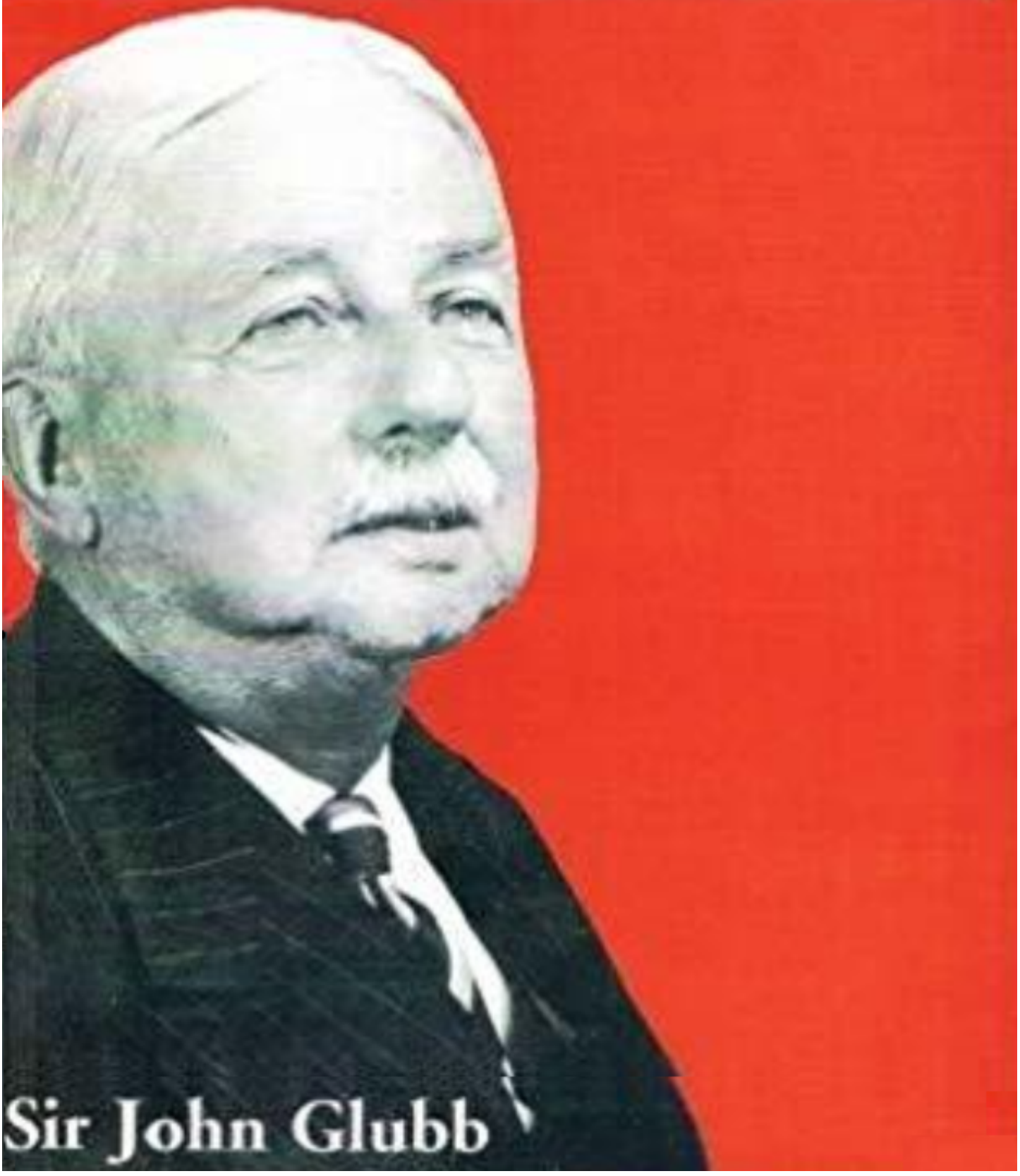
THE FATE OF EMPIRES

and

Search for Survival



Sir John Glubb

THE FATE OF EMPIRES
and
SEARCH FOR SURVIVAL

Sir John Bagot Glubb

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About John Bagot Glubb

1st Blurb

JOHN BAGOT GLUBB was born in 1897, his father being a regular officer in the Royal Engineers.

At the age of four he left England for Mauritius, where his father was posted for a three-year tour of duty. At the age of ten he was sent to school for a year in Switzerland. These youthful travels may have opened his mind to the outside world at an early age.

He entered the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich in September 1914, and was commissioned in the Royal Engineers in April 1915. He served throughout the first World War in France and Belgium, being wounded three times and awarded the Military Cross. In 1920 he volunteered for service in Iraq, as a regular officer, but in 1926 resigned his commission and accepted an administrative post under the Iraq Government.

In 1930, however, he signed a contract to serve the Transjordan Government (now Jordan). From 1939 to 1956 he commanded the famous Jordan Arab Legion, which was in reality the Jordan Army. Since his retirement he has published seventeen books, chiefly on the Middle East, and has lectured widely in Britain, the United States and Europe.

Sir John Glubb, better known as Glubb Pasha, was born in 1897, and served in France in the First World War from 1915 to 1918. In 1926 he left the regular army to serve the Iraq Government. From 1939 to 1956, he commanded the famous Jordan Arab Legion. Since retirement, he has published sixteen books, chiefly on the Middle East, and has lectured widely.

2nd Blurb

SIR JOHN BAGOT GLUBB, better known as Glubb Pasha (16 April 1897–17 March 1986), was a British soldier best known for commanding Transjordan's Arab Legion 1939-1956. During World War I, he served in France and was then transferred to Iraq in 1920, a British colony at the time.

Educated at Cheltenham College, he became an officer of the Arab Legion in 1930. The next year he formed the Desert Patrol, an exclusively Bedouin force, to curb the raiding problem that plagued the southern part of the country. Within a few years he had managed to get the Bedouin to abandon their habit of raiding neighbour tribes and the raids were soon a thing of the past.

In 1939, Glubb succeeded Frederick G. Peake as the commander of the Arab Legion. During this period, he transformed the legion into the best trained force in the Arab world.

He remained as the commander of the Arab Legion until March 2, 1956 when he was dismissed by King Hussein who wanted to distance himself from the British after the Suez War. He spent the remainder of his life lecturing and writing books and articles, mostly on the Middle East and his experiences with the Arabs.

His nickname "Abu Hunaik" referred to his crooked jaw, a legacy of the First World War. The word "hunaik" was unfamiliar to me and I enquired of some Bedouin friends what it meant. They misunderstood me.

"Abu Hunaik? He was an Englishman, a soldier and a friend to the Bedouin a long time ago. It was he who built the fort at Wadi Rum".

This is quite remarkable when one realises that these particular men were born more than 20 years after Glubb's definitive departure from the Middle East. They were vague about the name "Glubb Pasha" though…

Since retirement, he has published sixteen books, chiefly on the Middle East, and has lectured widely.

Introduction

As we pass through life, we learn by experience. We look back on our behaviour when we were young and think how foolish we were. In the same way our family, our community and our town endeavour to avoid the mistakes made by our predecessors.

The experiences of the human race have been recorded, in more or less detail, for some four thousand years. If we attempt to study such a period of time in as many countries as possible, we seem to discover the same patterns constantly repeated under widely differing conditions of climate, culture and religion. Surely, we ask ourselves, if we studied calmly and impartially the history of human institutions and development over these four thousand years, should we not reach conclusions which would assist to solve our problems today? For everything that is occurring around us has happened again and again before.

No such conception ever appears to have entered into the minds of our historians. In general, historical teaching in schools is limited to this small island. We endlessly mull over the Tudors and the Stewarts, the Battle of Crecy, and Guy Fawkes. Perhaps this narrowness is due to our examination system, which necessitates the careful definition of a syllabus which all children must observe.

I remember once visiting a school for mentally handicapped children. ‘Our children do not have to take examinations,’ the headmaster told me, ‘and so we are able to teach them things which will be really useful to them in life.’

However this may be, the thesis which I wish to propound is that priceless lessons could be learned if the history of the past four thousand years could be thoroughly and impartially studied. In these two articles, which first appeared in *Blackwood’s Magazine*, I have attempted briefly to sketch some of the kinds of lessons which I believe we could learn. My plea is that history should be the history of the human race, not of one small country or period.

THE FATE OF EMPIRES

I: *Learning from history*

'THE ONLY THING we learn from history,' it has been said, 'is that men never learn from history', a sweeping generalisation perhaps, but one which the chaos in the world today goes far to confirm. What then can be the reason why, in a society which claims to probe every problem, the bases of history are still so completely unknown?

Several reasons for the futility of our historical studies may be suggested.

First, our historical work is limited to short periods—the history of our own country, or that of some past age which, for some reason, we hold in respect.

Second, even within these short periods, the slant we give to our narrative is governed by our own vanity rather than by objectivity. If we are considering the history of our own country, we write at length of the periods when our ancestors were prosperous and victorious, but we pass quickly over their shortcomings or their defeats. Our people are represented as patriotic heroes, their enemies as grasping imperialists, or subversive rebels. In other words, our national histories are propaganda, not well-balanced investigations.

Third, in the sphere of world history, we study certain short, usually unconnected, periods, which fashion at certain epochs has made popular. Greece 500 years before Christ, and the Roman Republic and early Roman Empire are cases in point. The intervals between the 'great periods' are neglected. Recently Greece and Rome have become largely discredited, and history tends to become increasingly the parochial history of our own countries.

To derive any useful instruction from history, it seems to me essential first of all to grasp the principle that history, to be meaningful, must be the history of the human race. For history is a continuous process, gradually developing, changing and turning back, but in general moving forward in a single mighty stream. Any useful lessons to be derived must be learned by the study of the whole flow of human development, not by the selection of short periods here and there in one country or another.

Every age and culture is derived from its predecessors, adds some contribution of its own, and passes it on to its successors. If we boycott

various periods of history, the origins of the new cultures which succeeded them cannot be explained.

Physical science has expanded its knowledge by building on the work of its predecessors, and by making millions of careful experiments, the results of which are meticulously recorded. Such methods have not yet been employed in the study of world history. Our piecemeal historical work is still mainly dominated by emotion and prejudice.

II. *The lives of empires*

IF WE DESIRE to ascertain the laws which govern the rise and fall of empires, the obvious course is to investigate the imperial experiments recorded in history, and to endeavour to deduce from them any lessons which seem to be applicable to them all.

The word ‘empire’, by association with the British Empire, is visualised by some people as an organisation consisting of a home-country in Europe and ‘colonies’ in other continents. In this essay, the term ‘empire’ is used to signify a great power, often called today a super-power. Most of the empires in history have been large landblocks, almost without overseas possessions.

We possess a considerable amount of information on many empires recorded in history, and of their vicissitudes and the lengths of their lives, for example:

The nation	*Dates of rise and fall*	*Duration in years*
Assyria	859-612 B.C.	247
Persia	538-330 B.C.	208
(Cyrus and his descendants)		
Greece	331-100 B.C.	231
(Alexander and his successors)		
Roman Republic	260-27 B.C.	233
Roman Empire	27 B.C.-A.D. 180	207
Arab Empire	A.D. 634-880	246
Mameluke Empire	1250-1517	267
Ottoman Empire	1320-1570	250
Spain	1500-1750	250
Romanov Russia	1682-1916	234
Britain	1700-1950	250

This list calls for certain comments.

(1) The present writer is exploring the facts, not trying to prove anything. The dates given are largely arbitrary. Empires do not usually begin or end on a certain date. There is normally a gradual period of expansion and then a period of decline. The resemblance in the duration of these great powers may be queried. Human affairs are subject to many changes, and it is not to be expected that they could be calculated with mathematical accuracy.
(2) Nevertheless, it is suggested that there is sufficient resemblance between the life periods of these different empires to justify further study.
(3) The division of Rome into two periods may be thought unwarranted. The first, or republican, period dates from the time when Rome became the mistress of Italy, and ends with the accession of Augustus. The imperial period extends from the accession of Augustus to the death of Marcus Aurelius. It is true that the empire survived nominally for more than a century after this date, but it did so in constant confusion, rebellions, civil wars and barbarian invasions.
(4) Not all empires endured for their full life-span. The Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar, for example, was overthrown by Cyrus, after a life duration of only some seventy-four years.
(5) An interesting deduction from the figures seems to be that the duration of empires does not depend on the speed of travel or the nature of weapons. The Assyrians marched on foot and fought with spears and bow and arrows. The British used artillery, railways and ocean-going ships. Yet the two empires lasted for approximately the same periods.

There is a tendency nowadays to say that this is the jet-age, and consequently there is nothing for us to learn from past empires. Such an attitude seems to be erroneous.
(6) It is tempting to compare the lives of empires with those of human beings. We may choose a figure and say that the average life of a human being is seventy years. Not all human beings live exactly seventy years. Some die in infancy, others are killed in accidents in middle life, some survive to the age of eighty or ninety. Nevertheless, in spite of such exceptions, we are justified in saying that seventy years is a fair estimate of the average person’s expectation of life.
(7) We may perhaps at this stage be allowed to draw certain conclusions:

(a) In spite of the accidents of fortune, and the apparent circumstances of the human race at different epochs, the periods of duration of different empires at varied epochs show a remarkable similarity.

(b) Immense changes in the technology of transport or in methods of warfare do not seem to affect the life-expectation of an empire.
(c) The changes in the technology of transport and of war have, however, affected the shape of empires. The Assyrians, marching on foot, could only conquer their neighbours, who were accessible by land —the Medes, the Babylonians, the Persians and the Egyptians.

The British, making use of ocean-going ships, conquered many countries and subcontinents, which were accessible to them by water— North America, India, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand—but they never succeeded in conquering their neighbours, France, Germany and Spain.

But, although the shapes of the Assyrian and the British Empires were entirely different, both lasted about the same length of time.

III: *The human yardstick*

WHAT THEN, WE may ask, can have been the factor which caused such an extraordinary similarity in the duration of empires, under such diverse conditions, and such utterly different technological achievements?

One of the very few units of measurement which have not seriously changed since the Assyrians is the human ‘generation’, a period of about twenty-five years. Thus a period of 250 years would represent about ten generations of people. A closer examination of the characteristics of the rise and fall of great nations may emphasise the possible significance of the sequence of generations.

Let us then attempt to examine the stages in the lives of such powerful nations.

IV: *Stage one. The outburst*

AGAIN AND AGAIN in history we find a small nation, treated as insignificant by its contemporaries, suddenly emerging from its homeland and overrunning large areas of the world. Prior to Philip (359-336 B.C.), Macedon had been an insignificant state to the north of Greece. Persia was the great power of the time, completely dominating the area from Eastern Europe to India. Yet by 323 B.C., thirty-six years after the accession of

Philip, the Persian Empire had ceased to exist, and the Macedonian Empire extended from the Danube to India, including Egypt.

This amazing expansion may perhaps he attributed to the genius of Alexander the Great, but this cannot have been the sole reason; for although after his death everything went wrong—the Macedonian generals fought one another and established rival empires—Macedonian pre-eminence survived for 231 years.

In the year A.D. 600, the world was divided between two super-power groups as it has been for the past fifty years between Soviet Russia and the West. The two powers were the eastern Roman Empire and the Persian Empire. The Arabs were then the despised and backward inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula. They consisted chiefly of wandering tribes, and had no government, no constitution and no army. Syria, Palestine, Egypt and North Africa were Roman provinces, Iraq was part of Persia.

The Prophet Mohammed preached in Arabia from A.D. 613 to 632, when he died. In 633, the Arabs burst out of their desert peninsula, and simultaneously attacked the two super-powers. Within twenty years, the Persian Empire had ceased to exist. Seventy years after the death of the Prophet, the Arabs had established an empire extending from the Atlantic to the plains of Northern India and the frontiers of China.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Mongols were a group of savage tribes in the steppes of Mongolia. In 1211, Genghis Khan invaded China. By 1253, the Mongols had established an empire extending from Asia Minor to the China Sea, one of the largest empires the world has ever known.

The Arabs ruled the greater part of Spain for 780 years, from 712 A.D. to 1492. (780 years back in British history would take us to 1196 and King Richard Coeur de Lion.) During these eight centuries, there had been no Spanish nation, the petty kings of Aragon and Castile alone holding on in the mountains.

The agreement between Ferdinand and Isabella and Christopher Columbus was signed immediately after the fall of Granada, the last Arab kingdom in Spain, in 1492. Within fifty years, Cortez had conquered Mexico, and Spain was the world’s greatest empire.

Examples of the sudden outbursts by which empires are born could be multiplied indefinitely. These random illustrations must suffice.

V: *Characteristics of the outburst*

THESE SUDDEN OUTBURSTS are usually characterised by an extraordinary display of energy and courage. The new conquerors are normally poor, hardy and enterprising and above all aggressive. The decaying empires which they overthrow are wealthy but defensive-minded. In the time of Roman greatness, the legions used to dig a ditch round their camps at night to avoid surprise. But the ditches were mere earthworks, and between them wide spaces were left through which the Romans could counter-attack. But as Rome grew older, the earthworks became high walls, through which access was given only by narrow gates. Counter-attacks were no longer possible. The legions were now passive defenders.

But the new nation is not only distinguished by victory in battle, but by unresting enterprise in every field. Men hack their way through jungles, climb mountains, or brave the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans in tiny cockle-shells. The Arabs crossed the Straits of Gibraltar in A.D. 711 with 12,000 men, defeated a Gothic army of more than twice their strength, marched straight over 250 miles of unknown enemy territory and seized the Gothic capital of Toledo. At the same stage in British history, Captain Cook discovered Australia. Fearless initiative characterises such periods.

Other peculiarities of the period of the conquering pioneers are their readiness to improvise and experiment. Untrammelled by traditions, they will turn anything available to their purpose. If one method fails, they try something else. Uninhibited by textbooks or book learning, action is their solution to every problem.

Poor, hardy, often half-starved and ill-clad, they abound in courage, energy and initiative, overcome every obstacle and always seem to be in control of the situation.

VI: *The causes of race outbursts*

THE MODERN INSTINCT is to seek a reason for everything, and to doubt the veracity of a statement for which a reason cannot be found. So many examples can be given of the sudden eruption of an obscure race into a nation of conquerors that the truth of the phenomenon cannot be held to be doubtful. To assign a cause is more difficult. Perhaps the easiest explanation is to assume that the poor and obscure race is tempted by the wealth of the

ancient civilisation, and there would undoubtedly appear to be an element of greed for loot in barbarian invasions.

Such a motivation may be divided into two classes. The first is mere loot, plunder and rape, as, for example, in the case of Attila and the Huns, who ravaged a great part of Europe from A.D. 450 to 453. However, when Attila died in the latter year, his empire fell apart and his tribes returned to Eastern Europe.

Many of the barbarians who founded dynasties in Western Europe on the ruins of the Roman Empire, however, did so out of admiration for Roman civilisation, and themselves aspired to become Romans.

VII: *A providential turnover?*

WHATEVER CAUSES MAY be given for the overthrow of great civilisations by barbarians, we can sense certain resulting benefits. Every race on earth has distinctive characteristics. Some have been distinguished in philosophy, some in administration, some in romance, poetry or religion, some in their legal system. During the pre-eminence of each culture, its distinctive characteristics are carried by it far and wide across the world.

If the same nation were to retain its domination indefinitely, its peculiar qualities would permanently characterise the whole human race. Under the system of empires each lasting for 250 years, the sovereign race has time to spread its particular virtues far and wide. Then, however, another people, with entirely different peculiarities, takes its place, and its virtues and accomplishments are likewise disseminated. By this system, each of the innumerable races of the world enjoys a period of greatness, during which its peculiar qualities are placed at the service of mankind.

To those who believe in the existence of God, as the Ruler and Director of human affairs, such a system may appear as a manifestation of divine wisdom, tending towards the slow and ultimate perfection of humanity.

VIII: *The course of empire*

THE FIRST STAGE of the life of a great nation, therefore, after its outburst, is a period of amazing initiative, and almost incredible enterprise, courage and hardihood. These qualities, often in a very short time, produce a new and

formidable nation. These early victories, however, are won chiefly by reckless bravery and daring initiative.

The ancient civilisation thus attacked will have defended itself by its sophisticated weapons, and by its military organisation and discipline. The barbarians quickly appreciate the advantages of these military methods and adopt them. As a result, the second stage of expansion of the new empire consists of more organised, disciplined and professional campaigns.

In other fields, the daring initiative of the original conquerors is maintained—in geographical exploration, for example: pioneering new countries, penetrating new forests, climbing unexplored mountains, and sailing uncharted seas. The new nation is confident, optimistic and perhaps contemptuous of the ‘decadent’ races which it has subjugated.

The methods employed tend to be practical and experimental, both in government and in warfare, for they are not tied by centuries of tradition, as happens in ancient empires. Moreover, the leaders are free to use their own improvisations, not having studied politics or tactics in schools or in textbooks.

IX: *U.S.A. in the stage of the pioneers*

IN THE CASE of the United States of America, the pioneering period did not consist of a barbarian conquest of an effete civilisation, but of the conquest of barbarian peoples. Thus, viewed from the outside, every example seems to be different. But viewed from the standpoint of the great nation, every example seems to be similar.

The United States arose suddenly as a new nation, and its period of pioneering was spent in the conquest of a vast continent, not an ancient empire. Yet the subsequent life history of the United States has followed the standard pattern which we shall attempt to trace—the periods of the pioneers, of commerce, of affluence, of intellectualism and of decadence.

X: *Commercial expansion*

THE CONQUEST OF vast areas of land and their subjection to one government automatically acts as a stimulant to commerce. Both merchants and goods can be exchanged over considerable distances. Moreover, if the empire be an extensive one, it will include a great variety of climates, producing

extremely varied products, which the different areas will wish to exchange with one another.

The speed of modern methods of transportation tends to create in us the impresssion that far-flung commerce is a modern development, but this is not the case. Objects made in Ireland, Scandinavia and China have been found in the graves or the ruins of the Middle East, dating from 1,000 years before Christ. The means of transport were slower, but, when a great empire was in control, commerce was freed from the innumerable shackles imposed upon it today by passports, import permits, customs, boycotts and political interference.

The Roman Empire extended from Britain to Syria and Egypt, a distance, in a direct line, of perhaps 2,700 miles. A Roman official, transferred from Britain to Syria, might spend six months on the journey. Yet, throughout the whole distance, he would be travelling in the same country, with the same official language, the same laws, the same currency and the same administrative system. Today, some twenty independent countries separate Britain from Syria, each with its own government, its own laws, politics, customs fees, passports and currencies, making commercial cooperation almost impossible. And this process of disintegration is still continuing. Even within the small areas of the modern European nations, provincial movements demanding secession or devolution tend further to splinter the continent.

The present fashion for ‘independence’ has produced great numbers of tiny states in the world, some of them consisting of only one city or of a small island. This system is an insuperable obstacle to trade and cooperation. The present European Economic Community is an attempt to secure commercial cooperation among small independent states over a large area, but the plan meets with many difficulties, due to the mutual jealousies of so many nations.

Even savage and militaristic empires promoted commerce, whether or not they intended to do so. The Mongols were some of the most brutal military conquerors in history, massacring the entire populations of cities. Yet, in the thirteenth century, when their empire extended from Peking to Hungary, the caravan trade between China and Europe achieved a remarkable degree of prosperity—the whole journey was in the territory of one government.

In the eighth and ninth centuries, the caliphs of Baghdad achieved fabulous wealth owing to the immense extent of their territories, which constituted a single trade bloc. The empire of the caliphs is now divided into some twenty-five separate ‘nations’.

XI: *The pros and cons of empires*

In discussing the life-story of the typical empire, we have digressed into a discussion of whether empires are useful or injurious to mankind. We seem to have discovered that empires have certain advantages, particularly in the field of commerce, and in the establishment of peace and security in vast areas of the globe. Perhaps we should also include the spread of varied cultures to many races. The present infatuation for independence for ever smaller and smaller units will eventually doubtless be succeeded by new international empires.

The present attempts to create a European community may be regarded as a practical endeavour to constitute a new super-power, in spite of the fragmentation resulting from the craze for independence. If it succeeds, some of the local independencies will have to be sacrificed. If it fails, the same result may be attained by military conquest, or by the partition of Europe between rival super-powers. The inescapable conclusion seems, however, to be that larger territorial units are a benefit to commerce and to public stability, whether the broader territory be achieved by voluntary association or by military action.

XII: *Sea power*

One of the more benevolent ways in which a super-power can promote both peace and commerce is by its command of the sea.

From Waterloo to 1914, the British Navy commanded the seas of the world. Britain grew rich, but she also made the Seas safe for the commerce of all nations, and prevented major wars for 100 years.

Curiously enough, the question of sea power was never clearly distinguished, in British politics during the last fifty years, from the question of imperial rule over other countries. In fact, the two subjects are entirely distinct. Sea power does not offend small countries, as does military occupation. If Britain had maintained her navy, with a few naval

bases overseas in isolated islands, and had given independence to colonies which asked for it, the world might well be a more stable place today. In fact, however, the navy was swept away in the popular outcry against imperialism.

XIII: *The Age of Commerce*

LET US NOW, however, return to the life-story of our typical empire. We have already considered the age of outburst, when a little-regarded people suddenly bursts on to the world stage with a wild courage and energy. Let us call it the Age of the Pioneers.

Then we saw that these new conquerors acquired the sophisticated weapons of the old empires, and adopted their regular systems of military organisation and training. A great period of military expansion ensued, which we may call the Age of Conquests. The conquests resulted in the acquisition of vast territories under one government, thereby automatically giving rise to commercial prosperity. We may call this the Age of Commerce.

The Age of Conquests, of course, overlaps the Age of Commerce. The proud military traditions still hold sway and the great armies guard the frontiers, but gradually the desire to make money seems to gain hold of the public. During the military period, glory and honour were the principal objects of ambition. To the merchant, such ideas are but empty words, which add nothing to the bank balance.

XIV: *Art and luxury*

THE WEALTH WHICH seems, almost without effort, to pour into the country enables the commercial classes to grow immensely rich. How to spend all this money becomes a problem to the wealthy business community. Art, architecture and luxury find rich patrons. Splendid municipal buildings and wide streets lend dignity and beauty to the wealthy areas of great cities. The rich merchants build themselves palaces, and money is invested in communications, highways, bridges, railways or hotels, according to the varied patterns of the ages.

The first half of the Age of Commerce appears to be peculiarly splendid. The ancient virtues of courage, patriotism and devotion to duty

are still in evidence. The nation is proud, united and full of self-confidence. Boys are still required, first of all, to be manly—to ride, to shoot straight and to tell the truth. (It is remarkable what emphasis is placed, at this stage, on the manly virtue of truthfulness, for lying is cowardice—the fear of facing up to the situation.)

Boys' schools are intentionally rough. Frugal eating, hard living, breaking the ice to have a bath and similar customs are aimed at producing a strong, hardy and fearless breed of men. Duty is the word constantly drummed into the heads of young people.

The Age of Commerce is also marked by great enterprise in the exploration for new forms of wealth. Daring initiative is shown in the search for profitable enterprises in far corners of the earth, perpetuating to some degree the adventurous courage of the Age of Conquests.

XV: *The Age of Affluence*

THERE DOES NOT appear to be any doubt that money is the agent which causes the decline of this strong, brave and self-confident people. The decline in courage, enterprise and a sense of duty is, however, gradual.

The first direction in which wealth injures the nation is a moral one. Money replaces honour and adventure as the objective of the best young men. Moreover, men do not normally seek to make money for their country or their community, but for themselves. Gradually, and almost imperceptibly, the Age of Affluence silences the voice of duty. The object of the young and the ambitious is no longer fame, honour or service, but cash.

Education undergoes the same gradual transformation. No longer do schools aim at producing brave patriots ready to serve their country. Parents and students alike seek the educational qualifications which will command the highest salaries. The Arab moralist, Ghazali (1058-1111), complains in these very same words of the lowering of objectives in the declining Arab world of his time. Students, he says, no longer attend college to acquire learning and virtue, but to obtain those qualifications which will enable them to grow rich. The same situation is everywhere evident among us in the West today.

XVI: *High Noon*

THAT WHICH WE may call the High Noon of the nation covers the period of transition from the Age of Conquests to the Age of Affluence: the age of Augustus in Rome, that of Harun al-Rashid in Baghdad, of Sulaiman the Magnificent in the Ottoman Empire, or of Queen Victoria in Britain. Perhaps we might add the age of Woodrow Wilson in the United States.

All these periods reveal the same characteristics. The immense wealth accumulated in the nation dazzles the onlookers. Enough of the ancient virtues of courage, energy and patriotism survive to enable the state successfully to defend its frontiers. But, beneath the surface, greed for money is gradually replacing duty and public service. Indeed the change might be summarised as being from service to selfishness.

XVII: *Defensiveness*

ANOTHER OUTWARD CHANGE which invariably marks the transition from the Age of Conquests to the Age of Affluence is the spread of defensiveness. The nation, immensely rich, is no longer interested in glory or duty, but is only anxious to retain its wealth and its luxury. It is a period of defensiveness, from the Great Wall of China, to Hadrian's Wall on the Scottish Border, to the Maginot Line in France in 1939.

Money being in better supply than courage, subsidies instead of weapons are employed to buy off enemies. To justify this departure from ancient tradition, the human mind easily devises its own justification. Military readiness, or aggressiveness, is denounced as primitive and immoral. Civilised peoples are too proud to fight. The conquest of one nation by another is declared to be immoral. Empires are wicked. This intellectual device enables us to suppress our feeling of inferiority, when we read of the heroism of our ancestors, and then ruefully contemplate our position today. 'It is not that we are afraid to fight,' we say, 'but we should consider it immoral.' This even enables us to assume an attitude of moral superiority.

The weakness of pacifism is that there are still many peoples in the world who are aggressive. Nations who proclaim themselves unwilling to fight are liable to be conquered by peoples in the stage of militarism—

perhaps even to see themselves incorporated into some new empire, with the status of mere provinces or colonies.

When to be prepared to use force and when to give way is a perpetual human problem, which can only be solved, as best we can, in each successive situation as it arises. In fact, however, history seems to indicate that great nations do not normally disarm from motives of conscience, but owing to the weakening of a sense of duty in the citizens, and the increase in selfishness and the desire for wealth and ease.

XVIII: *The Age of Intellect*

WE HAVE NOW, perhaps arbitrarily, divided the life-story of our great nation into four ages. The Age of the Pioneers (or the Outburst), the Age of Conquests, the Age of Commerce, and the Age of Affluence. The great wealth of the nation is no longer needed to supply the mere necessities, or even the luxuries of life. Ample funds are available also for the pursuit of knowledge.

The merchant princes of the Age of Commerce seek fame and praise, not only by endowing works of art or patronising music and literature. They also found and endow colleges and universities. It is remarkable with what regularity this phase follows on that of wealth, in empire after empire, divided by many centuries.

In the eleventh century, the former Arab Empire, then in complete political decline, was ruled by the Seljuk sultan, Malik Shah. The Arabs, no longer soldiers, were still the intellectual leaders of the world. During the reign of Malik Shah, the building of universities and colleges became a passion. Whereas a small number of universities in the great cities had sufficed the years of Arab glory, now a university sprang up in every town.

In our own lifetime, we have witnessed the same phenomenon in the U.S.A. and Britain. When these nations were at the height of their glory, Harvard, Yale, Oxford and Cambridge seemed to meet their needs. Now almost every city has its university.

The ambition of the young, once engaged in the pursuit of adventure and military glory, and then in the desire for the accumulation of wealth, now turns to the acquisition of academic honours.

It is useful here to take note that almost all the pursuits followed with such passion throughout the ages were in themselves good. The manly cult

of hardihood, frankness and truthfulness, which characterised the Age of Conquests, produced many really splendid heroes.

The opening up of natural resources, and the peaceful accumulation of wealth, which marked the age of commercialism, appeared to introduce new triumphs in civilisation, in culture and in the arts. In the same way, the vast expansion of the field of knowledge achieved by the Age of Intellect seemed to mark a new high-water mark of human progress. We cannot say that any of these changes were ‘good’ or ‘bad’.

The striking features in the pageant of empire are:

(a) the extraordinary exactitude with which these stages have followed one another, in empire after empire, over centuries or even millennia; and
(b) the fact that the successive changes seem to represent mere changes in popular fashion—new fads and fancies which sweep away public opinion without logical reason. At first, popular enthusiasm is devoted to military glory, then to the accumulation of wealth and later to the acquisition of academic fame.

Why could not all these legitimate, and indeed beneficent, activities be carried on simultaneously, each of them in due moderation? Yet this never seemed to happen.

XIX: *The effects of intellectualism*

THERE ARE SO many things in human life which are not dreamt of in our popular philosophy. The spread of knowledge seems to be the most beneficial of human activities, and yet every period of decline is characterised by this expansion of intellectual activity. ‘All the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing’ is the description given in the Acts of the Apostles of the decline of Greek intellectualism.

The Age of Intellect is accompanied by surprising advances in natural science. In the ninth century, for example, in the age of Mamun, the Arabs measured the circumference of the earth with remarkable accuracy. Seven centuries were to pass before Western Europe discovered that the world was not flat. Less than fifty years after the amazing scientific discoveries under Mamun, the Arab Empire collapsed. Wonderful and beneficent as was the progress of science, it did not save the empire from chaos.

The full flowering of Arab and Persian intellectualism did not occur until after their imperial and political collapse. Thereafter the intellectuals attained fresh triumphs in the academic field, but politically they became the abject servants of the often illiterate rulers. When the Mongols conquered Persia in the thirteenth century, they were themselves entirely uneducated and were obliged to depend wholly on native Persian officials to administer the country and to collect the revenue. They retained as wazeer, or Prime Minister, one Rashid al-Din, a historian of international repute. Yet the Prime Minister, when speaking to the Mongol II Khan, was obliged to remain throughout the interview on his knees. At state banquets, the Prime Minister stood behind the Khan's seat to wait upon him. If the Khan were in a good mood, he occasionally passed his wazeer a piece of food over his shoulder.

As in the case of the Athenians, intellectualism leads to discussion, debate and argument, such as is typical of the Western nations today. Debates in elected assemblies or local committees, in articles in the Press or in interviews on television—endless and incessant talking.

Men are interminably different, and intellectual arguments rarely lead to agreement. Thus public affairs drift from bad to worse, amid an unceasing cacophony of argument. But this constant dedication to discussion seems to destroy the power of action. Amid a Babel of talk, the ship drifts on to the rocks.

XX: *The inadequacy of intellect*

PERHAPS THE MOST dangerous by-product of the Age of Intellect is the unconscious growth of the idea that the human brain can solve the problems of the world. Even on the low level of practical affairs this is patently untrue. Any small human activity, the local bowls club or the ladies' luncheon club, requires for its survival a measure of self-sacrifice and service on the part of the members. In a wider national sphere, the survival of the nation depends basically on the loyalty and self-sacrifice of the citizens. The impression that the situation can be saved by mental cleverness, without unselfishness or human self-dedication, can only lead to collapse.

Thus we see that the cultivation of the human intellect seems to be a magnificent ideal, but only on condition that it does not weaken

unselfishness and human dedication to service. Yet this, judging by historical precedent, seems to be exactly what it does do. Perhaps it is not the intellectualism which destroys the spirit of self-sacrifice—the least we can say is that the two, intellectualism and the loss of a sense of duty, appear simultaneously in the life-story of the nation.

Indeed it often appears in individuals, that the head and the heart are natural rivals. The brilliant but cynical intellectual appears at the opposite end of the spectrum from the emotional self-sacrifice of the hero or the martyr. Yet there are times when the perhaps unsophisticated self-dedication of the hero is more essential than the sarcasms of the clever.

XXI: *Civil dissensions*

ANOTHER REMARKABLE AND unexpected symptom of national decline is the intensification of internal political hatreds. One would have expected that, when the survival of the nation became precarious, political factions would drop their rivalry and stand shoulder-to-shoulder to save their country.

In the fourteenth century, the weakening empire of Byzantium was threatened, and indeed dominated, by the Ottoman Turks. The situation was so serious that one would have expected every subject of Byzantium to abandon his personal interests and to stand with his compatriots in a last desperate attempt to save the country. The reverse occurred. The Byzantines spent the last fifty years of their history in fighting one another in repeated civil wars, until the Ottomans moved in and administered the *coup de grâce*.

Britain has been governed by an elected parliament for many centuries. In former years, however, the rival parties observed many unwritten laws. Neither party wished to eliminate the other. All the members referred to one another as honourable gentlemen. But such courtesies have now lapsed. Booing, shouting and loud noises have undermined the dignity of the House, and angry exchanges are more frequent. We are fortunate if these rivalries are fought out in Parliament, but sometimes such hatreds are carried into the streets, or into industry in the form of strikes, demonstrations, boycotts and similar activities. True to the normal course followed by nations in decline, internal differences are not reconciled in an attempt to save the nation. On the contrary, internal rivalries become more acute, as the nation becomes weaker.

XXII: *The influx of foreigners*

One of the oft-repeated phenomena of great empires is the influx of foreigners to the capital city. Roman historians often complain of the number of Asians and Africans in Rome. Baghdad, in its prime in the ninth century, was international in its population—Persians, Turks, Arabs, Armenians, Egyptians, Africans and Greeks mingled in its streets.

In London today, Cypriots, Greeks, Italians, Russians, Africans, Germans and Indians jostle one another on the buses and in the underground, so that it sometimes seems difficult to find any British. The same applies to New York, perhaps even more so. This problem does not consist in any inferiority of one race as compared with another, but simply in the differences between them.

In the age of the first outburst and the subsequent Age of Conquests, the race is normally ethnically more or less homogeneous. This state of affairs facilitates a feeling of solidarity and comradeship. But in the Ages of Commerce and Affluence, every type of foreigner floods into the great city, the streets of which are reputed to be paved with gold. As, in most cases, this great city is also the capital of the empire, the cosmopolitan crowd at the seat of empire exercises a political influence greatly in excess of its relative numbers.

Second- or third-generation foreign immigrants may appear outwardly to be entirely assimilated, but they often constitute a weakness in two directions. First, their basic human nature often differs from that of the original imperial stock. If the earlier imperial race was stubborn and slow-moving, the immigrants might come from more emotional races, thereby introducing cracks and schisms into the national policies, even if all were equally loyal.

Second, while the nation is still affluent, all the diverse races may appear equally loyal. But in an acute emergency, the immigrants will often be less willing to sacrifice their lives and their property than will be the original descendants of the founder race.

Third, the immigrants are liable to form communities of their own, protecting primarily their own interests, and only in the second degree that of the nation as a whole.

Fourth, many of the foreign immigrants will probably belong to races originally conquered by and absorbed into the empire. While the empire is

enjoying its High Noon of prosperity, all these people are proud and glad to be imperial citizens. But when decline sets in, it is extraordinary how the memory of ancient wars, perhaps centuries before, is suddenly revived, and local or provincial movements appear demanding secession or independence. Some day this phenomenon will doubtless appear in the now apparently monolithic and authoritarian Soviet empire. It is amazing for how long such provincial sentiments can survive.

Historical examples of this phenomenon are scarcely needed. The idle and captious Roman mob, with its endless appetite for free distributions of food—bread and games—is notorious, and utterly different from that stern Roman spirit which we associate with the wars of the early republic.

In Baghdad, in the golden days of Harun al-Rashid, Arabs were a minority in the imperial capital. Istanbul, in the great days of Ottoman rule, was peopled by inhabitants remarkably few of whom were descendants of Turkish conquerors. In New York, descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers are few and far between.

This interesting phenomenon is largely limited to great cities. The original conquering race is often to be found in relative purity in rural districts and on far frontiers. It is the wealth of the great cities which draws the immigrants. As, with the growth of industry, cities nowadays achieve an ever greater preponderance over the countryside, so will the influence of foreigners increasingly dominate old empires.

Once more it may be emphasised that I do not wish to convey the impression that immigrants are inferior to older stocks. They are just different, and they thus tend to introduce cracks and divisions.

XXIII: *Frivolity*

As the nation declines in power and wealth, a universal pessimism gradually pervades the people, and itself hastens the decline. There is nothing succeeds like success, and, in the Ages of Conquest and Commerce, the nation was carried triumphantly onwards on the wave of its own self-confidence. Republican Rome was repeatedly on the verge of extinction—in 390 B.C. when the Gauls sacked the city and in 216 B.C. after the Battle of Cannae. But no disasters could shake the resolution of the early Romans. Yet, in the later stages of Roman decline, the whole empire was deeply pessimistic, thereby sapping its own resolution.

Frivolity is the frequent companion of pessimism. Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. The resemblance between various declining nations in this respect is truly surprising. The Roman mob, we have seen, demanded free meals and public games. Gladiatorial shows, chariot races and athletic events were their passion. In the Byzantine Empire the rivalries of the Greens and the Blues in the hippodrome attained the importance of a major crisis.

Judging by the time and space allotted to them in the Press and television, football and baseball are the activities which today chiefly interest the public in Britain and the United States respectively.

The heroes of declining nations are always the same—the athlete, the singer or the actor. The word ‘celebrity’ today is used to designate a comedian or a football player, not a statesman, a general, or a literary genius.

XXIV: *The Arab decline*

IN THE FIRST half of the ninth century, Baghdad enjoyed its High Noon as the greatest and the richest city in the world. In 861, however, the reigning Khalif (caliph), Mutawakkil, was murdered by his Turkish mercenaries, who set up a military dictatorship, which lasted for some thirty years. During this period the empire fell apart, the various dominions and provinces each assuming virtual independence and seeking its own interests. Baghdad, lately the capital of a vast empire, found its authority limited to Iraq alone.

The works of the contemporary historians of Baghdad in the early tenth century are still available. They deeply deplored the degeneracy of the times in which they lived, emphasising particularly the indifference to religion, the increasing materialism and the laxity of sexual morals. They lamented also the corruption of the officials of the government and the fact that politicians always seemed to amass large fortunes while they were in office.

The historians commented bitterly on the extraordinary influence acquired by popular singers over young people, resulting in a decline in sexual morality. The ‘pop’ singers of Baghdad accompanied their erotic songs on the lute, an instrument resembling the modern guitar. In the second half of the tenth century, as a result, much obscene sexual language

came increasingly into use, such as would not have been tolerated in an earlier age. Several khalifs issued orders banning ‘pop’ singers from the capital, but within a few years they always returned.

An increase in the influence of women in public life has often been associated with national decline. The later Romans complained that, although Rome ruled the world, women ruled Rome. In the tenth century, a similar tendency was observable in the Arab Empire, the women demanding admission to the professions hitherto monopolised by men. ‘What,’ wrote the contemporary historian, Ibn Bessam, ‘have the professions of clerk, tax-collector or preacher to do with women? These occupations have always been limited to men alone.’ Many women practised law, while others obtained posts as university professors. There was an agitation for the appointment of female judges, which, however, does not appear to have succeeded.

Soon after this period, government and public order collapsed, and foreign invaders overran the country. The resulting increase in confusion and violence made it unsafe for women to move unescorted in the streets, with the result that this feminist movement collapsed.

The disorders following the military take-over in 861, and the loss of the empire, had played havoc with the economy. At such a moment, it might have been expected that everyone would redouble their efforts to save the country from bankruptcy, but nothing of the kind occurred. Instead, at this moment of declining trade and financial stringency, the people of Baghdad introduced a five-day week.

When I first read these contemporary descriptions of tenth-century Baghdad, I could scarcely believe my eyes. I told myself that this must be a joke! The descriptions might have been taken out of *The Times* today. The resemblance of all the details was especially breathtaking—the break-up of the empire, the abandonment of sexual morality, the ‘pop’ singers with their guitars, the entry of women into the professions, the five-day week. I would not venture to attempt an explanation! There are so many mysteries about human life which are far beyond our comprehension.

XXV: *Political ideology*

TODAY WE ATTACH immense importance to the ideology of our internal politics. The Press and public media in the U.S.A. and Britain pour

incessant scorn on any country the political institutions of which differ in any manner from our own idea of democracy. It is, therefore, interesting to note that the life-expectation of a great nation does not appear to be in any way affected by the nature of its institutions.

Past empires show almost every possible variation of political system, but all go through the same procedure from the Age of Pioneers through Conquest, Commerce, Affluence to decline and collapse.

XXVI: *The Mameluke Empire*

THE EMPIRE OF the Mamelukes of Egypt provides a case in point, for it was one of the most exotic ever to be recorded in history. It is also exceptional in that it began on one fixed day and ended on another, leaving no doubt of its precise duration, which was 267 years.

In the first part of the thirteenth century, Egypt and Syria were ruled by the Ayoubid sultans, the descendants of the family of Saladin. Their army consisted of Mamelukes, slaves imported as boys from the Steppes and trained as professional soldiers. On 1st May 1250, the Mamelukes mutinied, murdered Turan Shah, the Ayoubid sultan, and became the rulers of his empire.

The first fifty years of the Mameluke Empire were marked by desperate fighting with the hitherto invincible Mongols, the descendants of Genghis Khan, who invaded Syria. By defeating the Mongols and driving them out of Syria, the Mamelukes saved the Mediterranean from the terrible fate which had overtaken Persia. In 1291, the Mamelukes captured Acre, and put an end to the Crusades.

From 1309 to 1341, the Mameluke Empire was everywhere victorious and possessed the finest army in the world. For the ensuing hundred years the wealth of the Mameluke Empire was fabulous, slowly leading to luxury, the relaxation of discipline and to decline, with ever more bitter internal political rivalries. Finally the empire collapsed in 1517, as the result of military defeat by the Ottomans.

The Mameluke government appears to us utterly illogical and fantastic. The ruling class was entirely recruited from young boys, born in what is now Southern Russia. Every one of them was enlisted as a private soldier. Even the sultans had begun life as private soldiers and had risen from the ranks. Yet this extraordinary political system resulted in an empire which

passed through all the normal stages of conquest, commercialism, affluence and decline and which lasted approximately the usual period of time.

XXVII: *The master race*

THE PEOPLE OF the great nations of the past seem normally to have imagined that their pre-eminence would last for ever. Rome appeared to its citizens to be destined to be for all time the mistress of the world. The Abbasid Khalifs of Baghdad declared that God had appointed them to rule mankind until the day of judgment. Seventy years ago, many people in Britain believed that the empire would endure for ever. Although Hitler failed to achieve his objective, he declared that Germany would rule the world for a thousand years. That sentiments like these could be publicly expressed without evoking derision shows that, in all ages, the regular rise and fall of great nations has passed unperceived. The simplest statistics prove the steady rotation of one nation after another at regular intervals.

The belief that their nation would rule the world forever, naturally encouraged the citizens of the leading nation of any period to attribute their pre-eminence to hereditary virtues. They carried in their blood, they believed, qualities which constituted them a race of supermen, an illusion which inclined them to the employment of cheap foreign labour (or slaves) to perform menial tasks and to engage foreign mercenaries to fight their battles or to sail their ships.

These poorer peoples were only too happy to migrate to the wealthy cities of the empire, and thereby, as we have seen, to adulterate the close-knit, homogeneous character of the conquering race. The latter unconsciously assumed that they would always be the leaders of mankind, relaxed their energies, and spent an increasing part of their time in leisure, amusement or sport.

In recent years, the idea has spread widely in the West that ‘progress’ will be automatic without effort, that everyone will continue to grow richer and richer and that every year will show a ‘rise in the standard of living’. We have not drawn from history the obvious conclusion that material success is the result of courage, endurance and hard work—a conclusion nevertheless obvious from the history of the meteoric rise of our own ancestors. This self-assurance of its own superiority seems to go hand-in-

hand with the luxury resulting from wealth, in undermining the character of the dominant race.

XXVIII: *The welfare state*

WHEN THE WELFARE state was first introduced in Britain, it was hailed as a new high-water mark in the history of human development.

History, however, seems to suggest that the age of decline of a great nation is often a period which shows a tendency to philanthropy and to sympathy for other races. This phase may not be contradictory to the feeling described in the previous paragraph, that the dominant race has the right to rule the world. For the citizens of the great nation enjoy the role of Lady Bountiful. As long as it retains its status of leadership, the imperial people are glad to be generous, even if slightly condescending. The rights of citizenship are generously bestowed on every race, even those formerly subject, and the equality of mankind is proclaimed. The Roman Empire passed through this phase, when equal citizenship was thrown open to all peoples, such provincials even becoming senators and emperors.

The Arab Empire of Baghdad was equally, perhaps even more, generous. During the Age of Conquests, pure-bred Arabs had constituted a ruling class, but in the ninth century the empire was completely cosmopolitan.

State assistance to the young and the poor was equally generous. University students received government grants to cover their expenses while they were receiving higher education. The State likewise offered free medical treatment to the poor. The first free public hospital was opened in Baghdad in the reign of Harun al-Rashid (786-809), and under his son, Mamun, free public hospitals sprang up all over the Arab world from Spain to what is now Pakistan.

The impression that it will always be automatically rich causes the declining empire to spend lavishly on its own benevolence, until such time as the economy collapses, the universities are closed and the hospitals fall into ruin.

It may perhaps be incorrect to picture the welfare state as the high-water mark of human attainment. It may merely prove to be one more regular milestone in the life-story of an aging and decrepit empire.

XXIX: *Religion*

HISTORIANS OF PERIODS of decadence often refer to a decline in religion, but, if we extend our investigation over a period covering the Assyrians (859-612 B.C.) to our own times, we have to interpret religion in a very broad sense. Some such definition as 'the human feeling that there is something, some invisible Power, apart from material objects, which controls human life and the natural world'.

We are probably too narrow and contemptuous in our interpretation of idol worship. The people of ancient civilisations were as sensible as we are, and would scarcely have been so foolish as to worship sticks and stones fashioned by their own hands. The idol was for them merely a symbol, and represented an unknown, spiritual reality, which controlled the lives of men and demanded human obedience to its moral precepts.

We all know only too well that minor differences in the human visualisation of this Spirit frequently became the ostensible reason for human wars, in which both sides claimed to be fighting for the true God, but the absurd narrowness of human conceptions should not blind us to the fact that, very often, both sides believed their campaigns to have a moral background. Genghis Khan, one of the most brutal of all conquerors, claimed that God had delegated him the duty to exterminate the decadent races of the civilised world. Thus the Age of Conquests often had some kind of religious atmosphere, which implied heroic self-sacrifice for the cause.

But this spirit of dedication was slowly eroded in the Age of Commerce by the action of money. People make money for themselves, not for their country. Thus periods of affluence gradually dissolved the spirit of service, which had caused the rise of the imperial races.

In due course, selfishness permeated the community, the coherence of which was weakened until disintegration was threatened. Then, as we have seen, came the period of pessimism with the accompanying spirit of frivolity and sensual indulgence, by-products of despair. It was inevitable at such times that men should look back yearningly to the days of 'religion', when the spirit of self-sacrifice was still strong enough to make men ready to give and to serve, rather than to snatch.

But while despair might permeate the greater part of the nation, others achieved a new realisation of the fact that only readiness for self-sacrifice

could enable a community to survive. Some of the greatest saints in history lived in times of national decadence, raising the banner of duty and service against the flood of depravity and despair.

In this manner, at the height of vice and frivolity the seeds of religious revival are quietly sown. After, perhaps, several generations (or even centuries) of suffering, the impoverished nation has been purged of its selfishness and its love of money, religion regains its sway and a new era sets in. ‘It is good for me that I have been afflicted,’ said the psalmist, ‘that I might learn Thy Statutes.’

XXX: *New combinations*

WE HAVE TRACED the rise of an obscure race to fame, through the stages of conquest, commercialism, affluence, and intellectualism, to disintegration, decadence and despair. We suggested that the dominant race at any given time imparts its leading characteristics to the world around, being in due course succeeded by another empire. By this means, we speculated, many successive races succeeded one another as super-powers, and in turn bequeathed their peculiar qualities to mankind at large.

But the objection may here be raised that some day the time will come when all the races of the world will in turn have enjoyed their period of domination and have collapsed again in decadence. When the whole human race has reached the stage of decadence, where will new energetic conquering races be found?

The answer is at first partially obscured by our modern habit of dividing the human race into nations, which we seem to regard as water-tight compartments, an error responsible for innumerable misunderstandings.

In earlier times, warlike nomadic nations invaded the territories of decadent peoples and settled there. In due course, they intermarried with the local population and a new race resulted, though it sometimes retained an old name. The barbarian invasions of the Roman Empire probably provide the example best known today in the West. Others were the Arab conquests of Spain, North Africa and Persia, the Turkish conquests of the Ottoman Empire, or even the Norman Conquest of England.

In all such cases, the conquered countries were originally fully inhabited and the invaders were armies, which ultimately settled down and married, and produced new races.

In our times, there are few nomadic conquerors left in the world, who could invade more settled countries bringing their tents and flocks with them. But ease of travel has resulted in an equal, or probably an even greater, intermixture of populations. The extreme bitterness of modern internal political struggles produces a constant flow of migrants from their native countries to others, where the social institutions suit them better.

The vicissitudes of trade and business similarly result in many persons moving to other countries, at first intending to return, but ultimately settling down in their new countries.

The population of Britain has been constantly changing, particularly in the last sixty years, owing to the influx of immigrants from Europe, Asia and Africa, and the exit of British citizens to the Dominions and the United States. The latter is, of course, the most obvious example of the constant rise of new nations, and of the transformation of the ethnic content of old nations through this modern nomadism.

XXXI: *Decadence of a system*

IT IS OF interest to note that decadence is the disintegration of a system, not of its individual members. The habits of the members of the community have been corrupted by the enjoyment of too much money and too much power for too long a period. The result has been, in the framework of their national life, to make them selfish and idle. A community of selfish and idle people declines, internal quarrels develop in the division of its dwindling wealth, and pessimism follows, which some of them endeavour to drown in sensuality or frivolity. In their own surroundings, they are unable to redirect their thoughts and their energies into new channels.

But when individual members of such a society emigrate into entirely new surroundings, they do not remain conspicuously decadent, pessimistic or immoral among the inhabitants of their new homeland. Once enabled to break away from their old channels of thought, and after a short period of readjustment, they become normal citizens of their adopted countries. Some of them, in the second and third generations, may attain pre-eminence and leadership in their new communities.

This seems to prove that the decline of any nation does not undermine the energies or the basic character of its members. Nor does the decadence of a number of such nations permanently impoverish the human race.

Decadence is both mental and moral deterioration, produced by the slow decline of the community from which its members cannot escape, as long as they remain in their old surroundings. But, transported elsewhere, they soon discard their decadent ways of thought, and prove themselves equal to the other citizens of their adopted country.

XXXII: *Decadence is not physical*

NEITHER IS DECADENCE physical. The citizens of nations in decline are sometimes described as too physically emasculated to be able to bear hardship or make great efforts. This does not seem to be a true picture. Citizens of great nations in decadence are normally physically larger and stronger than those of their barbarian invaders.

Moreover, as was proved in Britain in the first World War, young men brought up in luxury and wealth found little difficulty in accustoming themselves to life in the frontline trenches. The history of exploration proves the same point. Men accustomed to comfortable living in homes in Europe or America were able to show as much endurance as the natives in riding camels across the desert or in hacking their way through tropical forests.

Decadence is a moral and spiritual disease, resulting from too long a period of wealth and power, producing cynicism, decline of religion, pessimism and frivolity. The citizens of such a nation will no longer make an effort to save themselves, because they are not convinced that anything in life is worth saving.

XXXIII: *Human diversity*

GENERALISATIONS ARE ALWAYS dangerous. Human beings are all different. The variety in human life is endless. If this be the case with individuals, it is much more so with nations and cultures. No two societies, no two peoples, no two cultures are exactly the same. In these circumstances, it will be easy for critics to find many objections to what has been said, and to point out exceptions to the generalisations.

There is some value in comparing the lives of nations to those of individuals. No two persons in the world are identical. Moreover their lives are often affected by accidents or by illness, making the divergences even

more obvious. Yet, in fact, we can generalise about human life from many different aspects. The characteristics of childhood, adolescence, youth, middle and old age are well known. Some adolescents, it is true, are prematurely wise and serious. Some persons in middle age still seem to he young. But such exceptions do not invalidate the general character of human life from the cradle to the grave.

I venture to submit that the lives of nations follow a similar pattern. Superficially, all seem to be completely different. Some years ago, a suggestion was submitted to a certain television corporation that a series of talks on Arab history would form an interesting sequence. The proposal was immediately vetoed by the director of programmes with the remark, 'What *earthly* interest could the history of medieval Arabs have for the general public today?'

Yet, in fact, the history of the Arab imperial age—from conquest through commercialism, to affluence, intellectualism, science and decadence—is an exact precursor of British imperial history and lasted almost exactly the same time.

If British historians, a century ago, had devoted serious study to the Arab Empire, they could have foreseen almost everything that has happened in Britain down to 1976.

XXXIV: *A variety of falls*

IT HAS BEEN shown that, normally, the rise and fall of great nations are due to internal reasons alone. Ten generations of human beings suffice to transform the hardy and enterprising pioneer into the captious citizen of the welfare state. But whereas the life histories of great nations show an unexpected uniformity, the nature of their falls depends largely on outside circumstances and thus shows a high degree of diversity.

The Roman Republic, as we have seen, was followed by the empire, which became a super-state, in which all the natives of the Mediterranean basin, regardless of race, possessed equal rights. The name of Rome, originally a city-state, passed from it to an equalitarian international empire.

This empire broke in half, the western half being overrun by northern barbarians, the eastern half forming the East Roman or Byzantine Empire.

The vast Arab Empire broke up in the ninth century into many fragments, of which one former colony, Moslem Spain, ran its own 250-

year course as an independent empire. The homelands of Syria and Iraq, however, were conquered by successive waves of Turks to whom they remained subject for 1,000 years.

The Mameluke Empire of Egypt and Syria, on the other hand, was conquered in one campaign by the Ottomans, the native population merely suffering a change of masters.

The Spanish Empire (1500-1750) endured for the conventional 250 years, terminated only by the loss of its colonies. The homeland of Spain fell, indeed, from its high estate of a super-power, but remained as an independent nation until today.

Romanov Russia (1682-1916) ran the normal course, but was succeeded by the Soviet Union.

It is unnecessary to labour the point, which we may attempt to summarise briefly. Any regime which attains great wealth and power seems with remarkable regularity to decay and fall apart in some ten generations. The ultimate fate of its component parts, however, does not depend on its internal nature, but on the other organisations which appear at the time of its collapse and succeed in devouring its heritage. Thus the lives of great powers are surprisingly uniform, but the results of their falls are completely diverse.

XXXV: *Inadequacy of our historical studies*

IN FACT, THE modern nations of the West have derived only limited value from their historical studies, because they have never made them big enough. For history to have meaning, as we have already stated, it must be the history of the human race.

Far from achieving such an ideal, our historical studies are largely limited to the history of our own country during the lifetime of the present nation. Thus the time factor is too short to allow the longer rhythms of the rise and fall of nations even to be noticed. As the television director indicated, it never even crosses our minds that longer periods could be of any interest.

When we read the history of our own nation, we find the actions of our ancestors described as glorious, while those of other peoples are depicted as mean, tyrannical or cowardly. Thus our history is (intentionally) not based

on facts. We are emotionally unwilling to accept that our forbears might have been mean or cowardly.

Alternatively, there are ‘political’ schools of history, slanted to discredit the actions of our past leaders, in order to support modern political movements. In all these cases, history is not an attempt to ascertain the truth, but a system of propaganda, devoted to the furtherance of modern projects, or the gratification of national vanity.

Men can scarcely be blamed for not learning from the history they are taught. There is nothing to learn from it, because it is not true.

XXXVI: *Small nations*

THE WORD ‘EMPIRES’ has been used in this essay to signify nations which achieve the status of great powers, or super-powers, in the jargon of today —nations which have dominated the international scene for two or three centuries. At any given time, however, there are also smaller states which are more or less self-contained. Do these live the same ‘lives’ as the great nations, and pass through the same phases?

It seems impossible to generalise on this issue. In general, decadence is the outcome of too long a period of wealth and power. If the small country has not shared in the wealth and power, it will not share in the decadence.

XXXVII: *The emerging pattern*

IN SPITE OF the endless variety and the infinite complications of human life, a general pattern does seem to emerge from these considerations. It reveals many successive empires covering some 3,000 years, as having followed similar stages of development and decline, and as having, to a surprising degree, ‘lived’ lives of very similar length.

The life-expectation of a great nation, it appears, commences with a violent, and usually unforeseen, outburst of energy, and ends in a lowering of moral standards, cynicism, pessimism and frivolity.

If the present writer were a millionaire, he would try to establish in some university or other a department dedicated solely to the study of the rhythm of the rise and fall of powerful nations throughout the world. History goes back only some 3,000 years, because before that period writing was not sufficiently widespread to allow of the survival of detailed

records. But within that period, the number of empires available for study is very great.

At the commencement of this essay, the names of eleven such empires were listed, but these included only the Middle East and the modern nations of the West. India, China and Southern America were not included, because the writer knows nothing about them. A school founded to study the rise and fall of empires would probably find at least twenty-four great powers available for dissection and analysis.

The task would not be an easy one, if indeed the net were cast so wide as to cover virtually all the world's great nations in 3,000 years. The knowledge of language alone, to enable detailed investigations to be pursued, would present a formidable obstacle.

XXXVIII: *Would it help?*

IT IS PLEASING to imagine that, from such studies, a regular life-pattern of nations would emerge, including an analysis of the various changes which ultimately lead to decline, decadence and collapse. It is tempting to assume that measures could be adopted to forestall the disastrous effects of excessive wealth and power, and thence of subsequent decadence. Perhaps some means could be devised to prevent the activist Age of Conquests and Commerce deteriorating into the Age of Intellect, producing endless talking but no action.

It is tempting to think so. Perhaps if the pattern of the rise and fall of nations were regularly taught in schools, the general public would come to realise the truth, and would support policies to maintain the spirit of duty and self-sacrifice, and to forestall the accumulation of excessive wealth by one nation, leading to the demoralisation of that nation.

Could not the sense of duty and the initiative needed to give rise to action be retained parallel with intellectual development and the discoveries of natural science?

The answer is doubtful, though we could but try. The weaknesses of human nature, however, are so obvious, that we cannot be too confident of success. Men bursting with courage, energy and self-confidence cannot easily be restrained from subduing their neighbours, and men who see the prospect of wealth open to them will not readily be prevented from pursuing it.

Perhaps it is not in the real interest of humanity that they should be so prevented, for it is in periods of wealth that art, architecture, music, science and literature make the greatest progress.

Moreover, as we have seen where great empires are concerned, their establishment may give rise to wars and tragedies, but their periods of power often bring peace, security and prosperity to vast areas of territory. Our knowledge and our experience (perhaps our basic human intellects) are inadequate to pronounce whether or not the rise and fall of great nations is the best system for the best of all possible worlds.

These doubts, however, need not prevent us from attempting to acquire more knowledge on the rise and fall of great powers, or from endeavouring, in the light of such knowledge, to improve the moral quality of human life.

Perhaps, in fact, we may reach the conclusion that the successive rise and fall of great nations is inevitable and, indeed, a system divinely ordained. But even this would be an immense gain. For we should know where we stand in relation to our human brothers and sisters. In our present state of mental chaos on the subject, we divide ourselves into nations, parties or communities and fight, hate and vilify one another over developments which may perhaps be divinely ordained and which seem to us, if we take a broader view, completely uncontrollable and inevitable. If we could accept these great movements as beyond our control, there would be no excuse for our hating one another because of them.

However varied, confusing and contradictory the religious history of the world may appear, the noblest and most spiritual of the devotees of all religions seem to reach the conclusion that love is the key to human life. Any expansion of our knowledge which may lead to a reduction in our unjustified hates is therefore surely well worth while.

XXXIX: *Summary*

As numerous points of interest have arisen in the course of this essay, I close with a brief summary, to refresh the reader’s mind.

(a) We do not learn from history because our studies are brief and prejudiced.
(b) In a surprising manner, 250 years emerges as the average length of national greatness.

(c) This average has not varied for 3,000 years. Does it represent ten generations?
(d) The stages of the rise and fall of great nations seem to be:
The Age of Pioneers (outburst)
The Age of Conquests
The Age of Commerce
The Age of Affluence
The Age of Intellect
The Age of Decadence.
(e) Decadence is marked by:
Defensiveness
Pessimism
Materialism
Frivolity
An influx of foreigners
The Welfare State
A weakening of religion.
(f) Decadence is due to:
Too long a period of wealth and power
Selfishness
Love of money
The loss of a sense of duty.
(g) The life histories of great states are amazingly similar, and are due to internal factors.
(h) Their falls are diverse, because they are largely the result of external causes.
(i) History should be taught as the history of the human race, though of course with emphasis on the history of the student’s own country.

SEARCH FOR SURVIVAL

Introduction

MAY I BEGIN by thanking all those who wrote to me on the subject of my article, ‘The Fate of Empires’, in the issue of December 1976? At first I attempted to answer each letter, but eventually I was overwhelmed. I must apologise to those who received no reply, and I hope that the following article may answer some of their comments.

As a result, however, this contribution will not be a homogeneous essay, leading from argument to argument. It will be a somewhat disjointed document, answering the various criticisms, queries and suggestions which I have received. It will also deal largely with short-term and parochial matters, for it was these subjects which were raised by most of my correspondents.

Many people wrote to ask why I had not predicted the future. The ‘Looker-On’ (*Blackwood’s*, May 1977) suggests that ‘going round reiterating that the end is nigh is hardly conducive to effort’. Other readers considered my article too pessimistic. The moral I would like to suggest is in the opposite sense—that we can save ourselves. Clearly, Britain will continue to exist, but the question is whether it will remain strong, united and free, or become a nation of underlings and mendicants. We are faced with many problems, but it is necessary to discover and diagnose them before we can take action. The object of my article was not, therefore, to moan, but indeed the exact opposite.

I have divided the present article into sections, each devoted to one of the subjects raised by my correspondents. It begins with a diagnosis and leads on to a proposed remedy.

1: Learning from History

A history of past events

Perhaps I should remind readers that what I wrote was intended to be history—that is to say, a commentary on past events.

My first suggestion was that we learn nothing from history, because our studies are too narrow—normally limited to our own countries. If anything, this tendency seems to be increasing. When my daughter at school took up history, I asked her what period she was to study. She replied, ‘The history of the trade union movement in Britain’—an example of contemporary politics masquerading as history.

Theories are derived from experiments

Physical science has been built up by great numbers of experiments, from which theories and laws can be deduced. In the same manner, I believe that the histories of great nations of the past should be methodically studied with a view to the attainment of theories by which we, and future generations, may be guided.

My first point, therefore, is that if history is to mean anything it must be the history of the human race from the beginning of recorded time.

Race outbursts

The chief cause of the outbursts of backward races is probably jealousy. The less fortunate wish to share the advantages of older, wealthier, more powerful civilisations. The odds against the newcomers seem to be overwhelming, but why were barbarian conquests so often successful? Perhaps one, if not the principal, reason is that old states tend to solidify into rigid forms, and to weaken or destroy individual initiative and psychological drive. In recent years the Vietnam War, in which the Vietcong showed more initiative and enterprise than did the Americans, may be taken as an example.

Military luxury

In the purely military field, the complicated and comparatively luxurious standard of the troops is a factor. An absurd example once happened to me. When accompanying a military column, we reached a group of wells. The Service doctors pronounced the water unfit for troops, and an expensive system of flying water to the column by the R.A.F. was adopted.

We had with us also a number of Arab irregulars who, with their families, had always drunk from these wells. But as they were now attached to the military column, they too were forbidden to drink, and water was flown out to them also.

In the same manner, British troops had to have a meat meal every day, whereas for the Arabs a handful of dates was sufficient. It is easy to see how these restrictions arose in a highly organised army or air force. If, on one occasion, a column drank from wells and three men developed typhoid, a general order was issued prohibiting the use of local wells.

The medical officers, watching the number of calories in the soldiers' rations, ordered a certain quantity of meat. Meanwhile the Arabs, who had never heard of calories, had gone on ahead, each with a handful of dates, and had engaged the enemy.

In the kind of operations on which we were engaged, the government won in the end owing to its greater resources, but the operations showed the difficulties produced by the complicated machinery of regular armies belonging to an 'old' nation.

2: Organisation and the Loss of Initiative

Initiative and self-reliance

In war, the morale is to the physical as three is to one. The ultimate result will depend on the energy, enthusiasm and, above all, the initiative of the troops. From this angle, we are obliged to admit that any form of organisation is liable to weaken initiative. Thus, the more the State is a welfare state, the more it will destroy the initiative and self-reliance of its citizens.

It is not necessary for us to be partisans for or against the welfare state. Partisans are usually people who see only one side of the picture. If we examine our dilemma impartially, we can see how difficult it is. It is easy to appreciate the benevolent intentions of the welfare state. A walk through the slums causes us to boil with indignation. The Government, we feel, must do something—take over the area, move the inhabitants elsewhere, and plan a new lay-out.

In the same way, the ideals of freedom from fear and freedom from want sound so philanthropic. The citizen must be protected from anything likely to alarm him. If he is poor, his wants must be supplied by the State. In the perfect welfare state, the citizen has nothing to fear. He can just sit back and be spoon-fed.

Then we discover that it was precisely fear and want which produced individual initiative and drive.

All organisation weakens initiative

In fact, we ultimately realise that any form of organisation tends to reduce the energy, initiative and enterprise of the individual. The pioneer felled the trees of the forest and built his own log cabin, which he defended against Red Indians and wild animals. He became a real man, relying entirely on his own efforts. In our industrial society, the individual is helpless. His job is encased in a closed shop. He can only comply with his union, which may be a nationwide organisation with which he has no personal relationship. If he is sick or unemployed, the welfare state provides for him.

He cannot leave his job and become self-employed. If he tries to do so, the welfare state applies penalties. We can understand how difficult is the

organisation of industry. But when a man wishes to earn his living independently, to prevent him from doing so is mere regimentation. Thus persons who wish to develop initiative are crushed.

These considerations emphasise the depth of our dilemma. How can an industrial nation avoid organising? How can it organise without destroying human freedom and killing enterprise, initiative, courage and self-reliance? Yet this regimentation and destruction of human initiative has been motivated (in Britain at least) by humane and benevolent intentions.

In my previous article, I attributed our decline to too long a period of wealth and power. I am still convinced that this diagnosis is correct. Perhaps, however, we should add, ‘to too much organisation and regimentation’.

3: Dividing the Nation

Enterprise and the exacerbation of politics

It would appear, therefore, that one of the results of too long a period of wealth, power and organisation is the weakening of enterprise and initiative. The pioneer spirit sets out to conquer new worlds and to discover new sources of wealth. The decadent mentality no longer embarks on new enterprises. It turns in on itself and begins to quarrel over the division of the wealth inherited from its forebears. A 'remarkable and unexpected symptom of national decline is the intensification of internal political hatreds,' I wrote.

This development seems to me to be due to two factors:

a) The substitution of money-making for honour, service or adventure as the object of life. Money-making is a selfish pursuit, which destroys the spirit of service to the community.
b) The loss of personal initiative and self-reliance in the individual, such as would make him embark on fresh ventures.

The result is a sordid squabble for the wealth still remaining. From the point of view of the nation, this is disastrous. Instead of standing together and encouraging our best men to make new discoveries or to win fresh markets, we devote ourselves to parochial feuds. While the workers in our car factories are on strike, the French, Germans, Italians and Japanese invade and conquer our domestic car market.

The ruler should stand for all

So intense does this in-fighting become that we hear the political leaders of one party promising their party supporters that, if elected, they will injure the other half of the nation.

The ruler of the nation, at any given moment, should stand for the whole nation. Britain has for many years been governed by a two-party system, but it is not the theoretical constitution which matters, rather the spirit which inspires the politicians.

When all were for the country, differences of opinion on policy occurred, but they did not lead to feuds which divided the nation.

The influence of the Crown

WITH THE INCREASING bitterness in party politics, the Crown is the only influence which covers impartially the whole nation. The bitterness of the politicians is largely due to their desire for power, patronage and money. The nation itself is essentially moderate and benevolent.

Few people, even in Britain, realise how many of their liberties depend on the Crown. There are not many countries in the world which have not, at some time, been subjected to military dictatorships, or at least to a too-powerful army general staff. In Britain, however, the armed services swear allegiance to the Crown, and, as a result, have been kept out of party politics.

The political party in office cannot dismiss officers of the armed services and replace them with officers affiliated to their party, as occurs in many other countries. Likewise the judiciary can retain their independence of political pressure.

Yet there are politicians who would like to erode all these safeguards and to pack the Services and the judiciary with their own political supporters. It is well to remember that in 1649 the House of Commons executed the King and abolished the House of Lords. Yet this did not result in a democratic House of Commons, ruling for the people. The overthrow of the balanced constitution led to the dissolution of the Commons and to ten years of military dictatorship.

Secession

AS I POINTED out, one of the problems of our time is the immense number of small states, each with its own policy, passport, customs and currency. One of the principal advantages of great nations is that they provide a large trading area. As long as the nation is prosperous and confident, everyone is proud to belong to it.

But as soon as times become difficult, it is amazing what ancient rivalries are revived. Secession movements spring up, which are dignified with the name of liberation. Where successful, these moves further narrow the free-trading areas of the world, and the possibility of peace and prosperity.

They render defence impossible. Innumerable splinter armies, with different languages, different training, weapons and equipment, are

impossible to command. The same applies to navies of three or four ships, or air forces with half a dozen squadrons, flying aircraft of peculiar designs.

Small is beautiful—or is it?

HAVING SERVED THE Jordan Government for twenty-six years, I am fully aware of the attractiveness of a small country. In the United States, and even in Britain, the individual is nothing. In a small country, everyone knows everyone else, and the leaders arc accessible and familiar. As against this, however, small countries are apt to be parochial in outlook.

On the other hand, the overwhelming necessities of commerce and defence require larger and larger areas without passports and customs and with perfectly integrated armed forces.

Perhaps compromises can be found, giving some local autonomies, combined with perfect union for commerce and defence. But in these violent times, such changes must be made with extreme wisdom and care. Our civilisation is constantly threatened by terrorism, and by the squadrons, flying aircraft of peculiar designs.

The European Community

THE DISCUSSIONS IN the Press regarding Britain's membership of the European Community seem to be limited normally to today's price of butter or meat. Such short-sightedness is lamentable. If we consider the question from a broader viewpoint, we may see it as a reaction against the ever-increasing number of splinter states, which make defence impossible and hamper trade.

The Roman state was originally a hegemony ruled by the city of Rome. But when the Roman Republic became effete and corrupt, it was transformed into the Roman Empire, which became a vast area of which all the inhabitants were equal citizens, and the whole of which constituted a single trading area, with the same laws, the same organisation and the same official language. By this means, the wealth, culture, power and security of the Roman state were rejuvenated.

We often forget that, before Augustus, the Roman Republic was corrupt, materialistic and divided against itself in bitter feuds, not unlike our condition today. With its transformation into a Mediterranean empire,

peopled by equal races, peace and prosperity returned. Augustus found Rome built of brick but left it made of marble.

It is in the broader, more statesmanlike context of such a possible revival of West European power and prosperity that the European Community should be considered.

One super-power

ONE OF MY CORRESPONDENTS asked what will happen when a single super-power is the only one left. I am inclined to think that this will not happen. Should one super-power ever conquer the world in a sudden blitzkrieg, I doubt if it would be able to hold it for long. There are too many nationalisms in the world, which some time or other would reassert themselves.

The result of overpowering mass weapons, such as could cow the whole world, would be resistance on a parochial scale with small weapons, the dagger, the pistol and the bomb. The world conqueror would be faced with innumerable local rebellions, which would build up into local wars, and we should be back again where we began. But the human suffering resulting from such upheavals would be incalculable.

A United Nations army

SOME YEARS AGO, our idealists were advocating a United Nations army, to discipline those countries that refused to obey the Organisation. Fortunately these proposals seem now to have lapsed. A worldwide organisation with the means of enforcing obedience to its orders would either be a fiasco or an unbearable tyranny.

4: Sea Power

Command of the sea

Another subject raised in this correspondence has been that of sea power. In my first article I wrote, ‘One of the more benevolent ways in which a super-power can promote both peace and commerce is by its command of the sea.’ Land garrisons established by a great power in a dependent territory are liable to provoke the resentment of Whitehall. The only objection to it was to the effect that the next war would be nuclear, and that one nuclear missile would destroy each such island base. On this assumption, one nuclear missile could destroy London, New York, Moscow, or any factory in any country. We might as well give up living now, on the grounds that we shall soon all be killed.

In fact, it is far from certain that the next war will be nuclear, and it is absurd to abandon all normal planning on such grounds. Moreover, the maintenance of British and American naval power all over the world would have been a major factor in the prevention of any future world war, nuclear or otherwise.

The Seychelles

While I was writing these lines, the Press announced a *coup d’état* in the Seychelles, a former British colony, now a member of the Commonwealth. The Head of State was in London at the Commonwealth Conference.

The Seychelles are just such a group of islands as could have been used as bases for Anglo-American sea power. Situated at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, they dominate the communications leading to the world’s largest reserves of oil.

The oil route

Today Europe depends largely on the Middle East for her oil, which is brought by tankers round the Cape of Good Hope. The Royal Navy has been withdrawn from the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Naval bases and co-operation with South Africa have been given up for ideological reasons, and Europe’s oil lifeline has been abandoned to chance or to the Russians.

Our priceless heritage

ONE OF THE MOST alarming facts in the modern scene is the degree of ignorance and incapacity which is so often displayed by the politicians whom the nation places in power. It was Britain which first discovered the benevolent and peace-keeping strength of sea power. The idea that the duty of the Royal Navy was to protect Britain from invasion from Europe would scarcely convince a child in a primary school.

Owing to the general wave of anti-imperialism in Britain after the Second World War, our priceless heritage, so vital to ourselves and to the peace of the world, was unthinkingly thrown away. The Royal Navy was deprived of its beneficent role in a fit of absence of mind.

We just can't afford it

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE maintenance of our naval power, particularly in the Indian Ocean, will perhaps be greeted with the remark: 'Very nice. But we just can't afford it.' This is as if a housewife were to say, 'We cannot afford to buy food for our family, because we have so many H.P. payments to make for the new car, the colour television and the washing-machine.' It is a question of priorities.

Britain derives the fuel and raw materials for her industries and the food for her people from overseas. If we cannot protect these essentials on the high seas, we shall die or lose our independence.

The reason why we cannot pay for our essential protection is that we all want more money and less work *now*. 'Let's enjoy ourselves now. We can pay the penalty later on', seems to be our motto. We cannot survive unless we take a more serious and far-sighted view of our needs and obligations.

5: The Lust to Coerce

Liberty or compulsion

One of the most unfortunate tendencies which permeate modern thinking is the reliance on coercion. If we do not agree with anyone, we attempt to force him to comply with our views, if not with weapons, then with strikes, blockades or boycotts.

We believe the policies of South Africa to be mistaken, but if we were her ally and partner, we could exercise more influence on their modification than we can do by boycott and disavowal.

This narrow-mindedness is extraordinary. We loudly proclaim the freedom of the individual, but if anyone dares to differ from our views in any respect, we immediately declare a blockade, a strike or a boycott. We claim to desire peace, yet we constantly stir up bitter hostility by our impatient intolerance. Would it not be wiser to be more calm, to reason, to discuss and to persuade amicably, than to issue peremptory ultimatums? Are we justified in assuming that we always know best, and that others had better agree with us, or else?

We assume this attitude in our internal affairs as much as in dealing with foreign nations. If the House of Lords rejects a Bill, we hear cries to abolish the Upper House. For trivial reasons employees call an official or unofficial strike, the resulting suffering falling on our fellow citizens. Every one of us seems to aspire to be a little dictator, though we all loudly denounce dictatorship.

The use of violence

I will not speak of the use of violence on moral grounds—the immediate results in human suffering are obvious enough. I will discuss it only in terms of its self-defeating futility. For human nature is such that the use of violence produces resentment. The victims of violence are embittered and nurse the desire for revenge. Sooner or later, their resentment will lead to counter-violence, which in its turn will cause another wave of counter-counter-violence, lasting perhaps for centuries.

Thus the wars of Napoleon may be seen as the cause of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and of both world wars.

In 1170, Strongbow, the Norman Earl of Pembroke, crossed to Ireland at the request of the King of Leinster, who had been driven from his throne by his neighbour, the King of Connaught. In 1172, Henry II crossed to Ireland. The effects of these initial acts of violence are with us to this day.

The same process may be traced all over the world, in the form of racial rivalries, and family or tribal blood-feuds. That violence solves nothing and only breeds more violence is a universal human law.

The need to maintain strength

AT THE SAME time, although we may realise the manner in which violence only breeds more violence, we must appreciate also that many nations deliberately intend to use violence to achieve their selfish ends. To abandon or to reduce too drastically our own armed forces is, therefore, not the way to end wars, but more probably to increase them. Those who consciously rely on violence would thereby be encouraged to embark on the offensive.

To reduce our armed forces in order to spend the money saved on social improvements is thus dangerously short-sighted. It might lead to another war, which would result in the loss of all our social services, and possibly also of our national independence.

Strength wins respect in this world. If we really want peace and the abandonment of violence, we need to be strong in order that we may be listened to. Our present situation is the reverse. Nobody listens to our admonitions, owing to our weakness. Yet we continue to tell everybody else how to behave, as though we were the patriarch of all the nations. Thereby we expose ourselves merely to resentment and contempt. Advice offered by the weak is rarely followed by its recipients.

6: Energy and Leadership

A decline in physical energy

European visitors to London at the beginning of the nineteenth century were impressed by the intense activity which they saw. Everybody in London was in a hurry. But in the second half of the century, this peculiarity was transferred to New York, where the pace and pressure of life were said to be almost unbearable.

But, in the February 1977 issue of *Blackwood's*, Jean Gimpel tells us that in 1956 the men and women in the streets of the United States 'were now walking to and from work in as leisurely a manner as if they were in Rome; and, like their counterparts in Paris, many executives were taking two hours or more for lunch'.

To what are we to attribute this regular decline in energy in old nations? Is it a physical phenomenon, the result of comfort and overeating? Or is it mental or moral, a decline in idealism and spirit?

It will be seen that, in many directions, we cannot solve our problems, because we have never thought in terms of the long-term rise and fall of nations and cultures. It is my earnest hope that the present debate might lead to a change in our historical studies, and to more research into the rise and fall of nations throughout history. Such studies might help us to discover the reasons for national decline and enable us to rectify them.

The lost art of leadership

However dedicated men may be, the success of their work inevitably depends on the quality of their leaders. I am convinced that the key to leadership lies in the principle: 'He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.' Leadership should not bring privileges, but duties.

No man should ask his subordinates to do more than he does himself. If work begins at eight in the morning, the top men should be there on time. If the workers snatch a quick lunch in a cafeteria, the directors should do the same, and not absent themselves for two hours to eat at a restaurant.

Everyone should enjoy his or her daily work. Enjoyment depends on personal relations. It is the duty of the senior men to make their

subordinates happy by knowing them personally and by producing a spirit of comradeship and of mutual pride in the work.

Warm personal relationships can be used by senior men to discuss with their subordinates the progress of the work, their mutual achievements and the difficulties which lie ahead. Such intercourse and exchange of confidences foster a sense of comradeship and team-work.

The plague of paper work

ONE OF THE principal obstacles to leadership today is the ever-increasing amount of paper work, which tends to keep senior people constantly at their desks, and hence militates against human relationships. This plague affects every department of our lives—industry, the armed services, the Church, the administration and almost every other human activity.

No amount of paper work, planning or statistics can produce comradeship.

'Liberation' from the office

WHEN I COMMANDED the Arab Legion, I too suffered from the endless stream of paper. Office life, moreover, was insidious. To escape from it, I found myself obliged to make and observe my own rule of life. Three days a week I spent in the office. The other three days I spent visiting the men at work or in the field, no matter how much paper lay in my in-tray. At a pinch, the extra paper work could be done in the house after working hours. Company directors and civil servants should remember that by calling for more reports and statistics, they make it impossible for their subordinates to carry out essential tasks of leadership.

Selfishness

I RECENTLY RECEIVED a letter from a friend in the United States in which he said that the outstanding characteristic of life in that country today is selfishness. This peculiarity seems to me to be due to the fact that the acquisition of money has become the chief object of our lives.

As I said in my first article, we make money for ourselves, not for our community or our country. We may, however, extend the charge of selfishness from individuals to confederations, trade unions and businesses,

each of which concentrates on the interests of its members, disregarding the country as a whole, and other bodies similar to itself.

The necessity for work

THE MOTTO OF the school at which I was educated was *Labor Omnia Vincit* —Work conquers everything. Asian immigrants often arrive penniless in the United States, but within five or six years they are wealthy and well established. The reason is that they are prepared to work day and night, whereas the native Americans work only short hours.

Trade unions have undoubtedly achieved great things in Britain, but they have also largely contributed to her decline by urging their members to restrict their output.

A constructive outlook necessitates hard work, increased production and an energetic policy of expansion. Such an attitude would result in the earning of increased wealth, leading to higher wages and an improved city environment.

Business executives who spend two hours at lunch and shop-floor workers who limit their own output are two faces of the same coin—a decline of energy and, above all, of enthusiasm.

We need constructive leaders who can rouse the nation to new energy and enthusiasm, as did Winston Churchill in his 1940 speech to the British people, when he told them that he had ‘nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat’.

Politicians who seek votes by promising the electors more money cannot supply positive leadership. Human beings can only be roused to enthusiasm by a clarion call to service and sacrifice for a noble cause.

Corruption

ANOTHER DEEPLY ALARMING symptom is the appearance of bribery and corruption in our public life. One outstanding quality which has characterised British civil servants for more than a century has been the absence of bribery. Living a great part of my life in the Middle East, I have endlessly heard the people of those countries express their surprise and admiration at the fact that British officers and officials never took bribes.

In the last few years, alas, we read of an increasing number of cases of bribery and corruption involving British public servants. Corruption is a

cancer which destroys a nation from within.

Intellectualism cannot provide a solution

I INDICATED THE shortcomings of intellectualism in my first article. We suffer today under the illusion that human cleverness can save us. A new ideology, a lot more new laws, more intellectual planning, a change of the party in office—these are offered as remedies for our distresses.

Politicians are unwilling or afraid to admit that our decline is due to a loss of moral fibre. Yet there cannot be the slightest doubt that this is the case. No amount of intellectual cleverness can restore greatness to a nation which has lost its energy, its initiative, its honesty and, above all, its dedication to service. ‘Only readiness for self-sacrifice can enable a community to survive,’ I wrote in my first article.

Our problems, therefore, are how to secure the reform of moral standards and how to bring about devotion to service and sacrifice.

Hitting them for six

PERSONALLY I BELIEVE in Britain. If we could only shake of our negative attitudes and resolve to stop our internal quarrels and to set ourselves energetically to work, I believe (to use a British metaphor) we could hit all our detractors for six.

7: The Position of Women

Feminism

I was surprised to receive little comment on my remarks regarding the increase of female influence in public life in times of national decline. I mentioned that the Arab feminist movement came to an end at the close of the ninth century, when the breakdown of public security made it unsafe for women to go out into the streets unescorted.

Once again, we do not know the reason for the emergence of women into public life in periods of decadence, because the rise and fall of nations have never been studied by our historians. Is there some way in which the men of a nation can become decadent, but not the women?

Reversal of the sexes

The increasing prominence of women in public life seems to coincide with a desire on the part of some men to imitate women. In Baghdad, there were young men who wore female clothes and strings of beads. This tendency may coincide with an increase in homosexuality. This has been called the reversal of the sexes—the men want to be women, the women men.

Of course the majority of men and women continue to marry, to produce families and to observe the normal relations between the sexes. Nevertheless, the reversal of the sexes seems to be a sign of decadence.

Again, however, while recording this development, we are unable to offer an explanation or a cure.

Women and the next generation

When considering the future, we realise the importance of women in deciding the quality of the next generation. The first ten years of life stamp the future character of a child, and during those years the influence of a good mother can be decisive. We can probably say with confidence that most of the great men in history owed their characters to their splendid mothers, rather than to the example of their fathers. It is for this reason that the modern tendency of women with small children to go out to work seems so fraught with future danger for our country.

Broken homes

THE EVER-INCREASING number of men and women who desert their spouses and children to run away with someone else provides an alarming portent for the future. The children, dragged from pillar to post, grow up mentally unstable, refractory, cynical and delinquent.

No statement could be farther from the truth than the claim that my morals are my own affair and are nobody else's business. The morals of every one of us are of vital importance to the future of our country.

Noble and selfless service

GOD, WE ARE told, created us male and female. But women seem to me to have rendered the more noble and selfless service and to have been the vital foundation of the nation. They toil day after day at their domestic duties and at bringing up their children, without the apparent rewards and publicity enjoyed by men. No doubt the realisation of the selfless service carried out by women gave rise to the veneration which occurred here and there in the past.

But even among ourselves, such practices as opening doors for women, allowing them to pass first, taking off the hat or giving up seats to women, were symptoms of the same feeling. They indicated that the nation was founded upon its women, who consequently deserved the respect and the veneration of men.

More 'liberation'

OF ALL THE internal quarrels to which we devote so much of our time, the most absurd is surely the demand for the 'liberation' of women. Both my grandmothers died before 1910, but I can remember them clearly. Certainly no suspicion of inferiority ever entered their minds. They presided like empresses, gentle and beloved, over their children and grandchildren.

Any good I may have done in my life I attribute principally to the influence of my mother.

Women and culture

WE MUST ALSO remember that women are the inspiration and the guardians of romance, poetry and culture. Any man who has served in an army at war,

or in a distant region where there were no women, realises how coarse and brutal men can become without female influence.

Men are the common clay of the human race, the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. How tragic it is that women, our guardian angels, the inspirers of all our best actions, should desire to descend from their high estate and rake in the mud of the sordid rat race.

8: Population and the Future

The unexpected happens

When attempting to discuss the future, it is interesting to observe that, all through history, the wisest men of their time have completely failed to foresee events. Providence always seems to have an utterly unexpected card to play. Who, ten or twenty years ago, foresaw the sudden enormous wealth which Iran and desert Arabia have acquired in the last three or four years?

Means of transport and communication

It is obvious that modern means of transport and communication must profoundly affect the future. Some people foresee the development of a single human race, sharing a common mixed culture. Such forecasts are no more than guesswork. The emergence of a single race and culture over the earth seems to me to threaten a tragic monotony and impoverishment in human life.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that propinquity does not necessarily mean either co-operation or fraternisation. The Greeks and the Turks have lived together in Cyprus for centuries, and only in the last few years has there been violent hostility. Ireland is another example of two races which have never amalgamated.

Is it not more probable, at least for a long time to come, that the ease of transport from one continent to another may result in the creation of many pockets of persons of various races, isolated amid different ethnic majorities?

Is compulsory integration wise?

Middle Eastern governments always realised that people prefer to live in their own communities, with others of the same language, customs and religion. Every city had its separate quarters for Arabs, Turks, Armenians, Persians, Circassians, Jews or Christians, or whatever they may have been. If all were fairly treated by an impartial government, no trouble occurred.

Obviously, however, all communities must be equally treated, where such public benefits as schools, roads, and municipal services are available.

If there is fair treatment for all, I am intensely opposed to officious governments attempting to regiment people by force.

National homogeneity

THE IDEA OF national homogeneity seems to be of Western origin, and has given rise to many problems. In the United States, troops have been used to compel black and white children to go to the same schools. The Israeli Government evicted hundreds of thousands of Palestine Arabs from their homes and their country by military force. The population of Israel was to be entirely Jewish.

The intellectual conception of homogeneity, in an age of rapid transportation, seems destined to lead only to violence and hatred.

It is true that, in my first article, I referred to the influx of foreigners as a source of national weakness, as indeed it is. I am inclined to think that homogeneous nations would be better. I do not mean thereby the rigid exclusion of all foreigners, who may enter a country for business, or as technical experts or for similar causes, but the mass transfer of populations.

But as transport becomes easier and faster, mixed populations may become inevitable. In such cases, the mutual toleration of different communities seems to be wiser than the attempt to integrate them by force.

World population

ONE OF MY CORRESPONDENTS offered the criticism that I did not mention the enormous increase in world population. My excuse is, once again, that I was writing the history of the past.

I must confess, however, that I do not know what the effect of world population increases may be in the future. In general, the more sophisticated nations do not increase much in population. The immense increases in the populations of Asia may well constitute a threat to other nations.

9: The Spirit Makes Alive

The effect of spirit

In all problems, it is not the cleverness of the planning which can ensure success, but the spirit which inspires the persons involved. Love will always find a way. Love, we are told, is patient and benevolent, is not jealous or arrogant, or selfish, and is not easily provoked. To some extent, the present ideals of the British Commonwealth are based on this spirit, if its leaders can live up to it. Above all, it means not to use compulsion, except in the very last resort—that is, if it is the only way to protect the weak from the most terrible forms of oppression.

A revival of religion

I am convinced that moral standards can only be raised by a revival of religion. The proliferation of 'isms' in our own times proves that no intellectual panacea can command general support. A group of clever people produce a theory of society which they are convinced will result in an earthly paradise, but it is impossible to build a dream society with violent, selfish people. Their theories are bitterly attacked by other groups, and conflict and hatred result.

Religion alone can persuade men to abandon their immediate, short-term selfishness and to dedicate themselves to the common good in complete self-oblivion. By religion, I mean the conviction that this life is not the end; that there is a spiritual world which, though invisible, penetrates all creation, and which can strike a sympathetic note in every human heart.

To accept the existence of this vast spiritual world immensely enlarges our horizon and enables us to see the pettiness of our quarrels and our attempts to grab for ourselves. It can result in a gradual transformation of our characters. But, more often than not, pride in our own cleverness closes our minds to the spiritual world which everywhere surrounds and envelopes us.

A message of hope

THE OBJECT OF my first article was not, therefore, to moan that ‘the end is nigh’, rather the reverse. Our decline is due not to external forces over which we have no control, but to our own greed, selfishness and immorality, and to our loss of courage and energy. ‘The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings.’ These are failings which each one of us can help to rectify.

Our duty is, therefore, to inaugurate movements for the reversal of these trends; scrupulously to carry out our duties to our families; to work as hard as we possibly can, and to carry our subordinates with us, through comradeship and personal relations; to seize every opportunity to speak and to write in favour of self-sacrifice, service and unselfishness. It is, above all, the revival of our spirit which will transform our situation and guarantee our future.

Our country is obsessed by the grudging spirit of ‘Why should I?’ We need leaders to inspire us once again with the spirit of selfless service. But if our leaders are incapable of setting us such an example, we must do it ourselves.

We need the spirit of the prophet who, when he heard that hard service was needed, cried joyfully, ‘Here am I! Send me!’

SUMMARY

1. Our teaching of history should be modified so as to include the history of the human race.
2. There can be no doubt that too long a period of power and wealth leads to decadence. We must diagnose how this occurs and take steps to rectify it.
3. Old nations suffer from atrophy owing to organisation, to rigid forms and to an ever-increasing bureaucracy, destroying individual initiative and psychological drive.
4. The armed forces recruited from a welfare state tend to lose initiative. Too luxurious a standard of living results in their becoming all tail and no teeth.
5. Too much organisation from above tends to destroy initiative. One of our chief problems is how to avoid over-organisation in an industrial nation.
6. We can appreciate the humane and benevolent intentions of the welfare state, while simultaneously realising that a spoon-fed population loses all initiative.
7. Decadent nations cease to explore new sources of wealth. Their energies are wasted in sordid squabbles over inherited wealth.
8. The influence of the Crown is impartial and thus valuable.
9. Both security and prosperity require large unified areas of free trade. The tendency to split up into smaller and smaller fragments increases poverty and insecurity.
10. The European Community is not a device to reduce the price of groceries in Britain. Its object is to produce a wider trading area and better integration of European defence measures.
11. The surest guarantee of world peace and free trade would be Anglo-American command of the sea. This fact, the foundation of the past greatness of Britain, does not seem to have been grasped by our modern politicians.
12. Although we talk of liberty, one of the most disastrous of modern trends is the tendency to use coercion, whether by the use of weapons, by strikes, blockades or boycotts. Reason, discussion and amicable

persuasion produce better and more lasting results. But in order to be listened to we need to be strong.

13. A notable feature of declining nations is a loss of physical energy. We cannot be sure of the reason, for national decline has never been the subject of research.
14. Every one of us can contribute to the recovery of our country by working harder and by fostering a sense of comradeship and team-work.
15. Bribery and corruption in public life are new features in Britain. They cannot be obliterated by more laws or by increased penalties, but only by the diffusion of a higher standard of morality.
16. The increasing appearance of women in public life seems to have been a symptom of decline of past nations. We cannot explain the reversal of the sexes because no research has been done in this field.
17. Women are the guardians of the national future by the dedication with which they bring up their children. When women neglect small children to earn a double salary for the family, there is grave danger of injury to the next generation.
18. Men should venerate women for their noble and selfless service. Women, in their turn, would do better not to descend from their high estate.
19. Ease of travel and the increase in world population may inevitably lead to mixed populations. This tendency presents many dangers of internal hatreds. It is better to allow people to live as they wish, and in separate communities if they so desire, rather than to force them to integrate.
20. Love—patient and benevolent—will always find a way. The ideals of the British Commonwealth are based on this spirit.
21. Only a revival of spiritual devotion—not fashionable ‘-isms’—can inspire selfless service.
22. Each one of us can contribute by leading moral and dedicated lives, and by speaking and writing in that sense. If we have no leaders to inspire us, we must ‘go it alone’.